

**“At the Pier,” *The Providence Morning Star* (Providence, RI), 10 Aug. 1882, 1<sup>1</sup>**

Oscar Wilde’s Visit the Event of the Season

Brief Jottings Gathered on the Beach and About the Hotels.

[Special Correspondence of the STAR.]

NARRAGANSETT PIER, Aug. 9.—The Pier is now fairly settled down, and everything runs with the regularity of clock work. As a friend of mine says, it is one continuous round of gaiety and pleasure now that the season is at its height. There is one good thing about life here, and that is it is absolutely free and easy, and but little effort is made toward any particular display. The town talk, if such a term can be applied, is over Oscar Wilde and his visit, which gave almost universal satisfaction. I say almost, for there were some, it is true, who did not have the pleasure either of seeing him or hearing his lecture, and they, of course, grumble.<sup>2</sup> Mr. Wilde was invited here by the management of the Mathewson house, to add one more to the many pleasures which their guests enjoy during the summer months, and not with the intention of making money. He came, he lectured, and he departed, and the event was a decided social success. The charge of receiving Mr. Wilde was given to Mr. Walter Mathewson, formerly of the Narragansett hotel, of Providence, and he made his plans and executed them admirably. He met Mr. Wilde and his agent, Mr. Morse, at Kingston, and took the train for the Pier. By the kindness of Mr. Morse your correspondent held a conversation with Mr. Wilde during the ride, and while not attempting an interview in any sense of the word, obtained his views on many subjects. He thinks the American journals, as a general thing, inferior to those in England as regards literary merit, but considers them admirable as news gatherers. As exceptions to this he considers the New-York *Herald* and *Tribune*, the Chicago *Times* and Boston *Herald* excellent journals. The reporters as a general thing he considers too young, and does not think they have the requisite education for the business, although their ability to gather news is undoubted. He remarked that while the young men of England could hardly be persuaded to enter the journalistic field, the American youth seemed to have a longing for it. The names of our Rhode Island towns, rivers and islands seemed to interest him very much, and he thought them far more interesting than the modern American names. A question from him as to the manufactory of jewelry in Rhode Island led me to tell of one firm who exhibited at the Centennial a com-

1. Reprinted in Cooper, J., “Wilde at the Pier,” Oscar Wilde in America, 24 Aug. 2023  
<https://oscarwildeinamerica.blog/2023/08/24/wilde-at-the-pier>

2. Wilde lectured on *The Decorative Arts* at Narragansett Pier on 7 August.

plete set of breast-pin and ear-rings, which they claimed they could sell for a cent, and in a tone of absolute horror he replied, "and they call that, jewelry." He expressed himself as greatly pleased with the country, the people and his treatment by them. About a half mile from the Pier the train was stopped, and a barouche in waiting carried Mr. Wilde, Mr. Morse and Mr. Mathewson to the rear of the hotel by a back road, and he was in his room almost before the train was at the station.

✂ *An account of Wilde's lecture in Narragansett.*

During the evening, Mr. Wilde was entertained at "The Studio," and seemed very much pleased with it. He left here Tuesday morning, at nine o'clock, for a trip to Saratoga, Ballston Spa, Richfield Springs, etc.<sup>1</sup>

1. Tuesday 8 August. Wilde lectured at Ballston Spa on 9 August, Saratoga Springs on 10 August, and Richfield Springs on 14 August. His tour of the Catskills and the New Jersey Shore lasted until 26 August.